

Group formed to fight against coin fraud

By Roger Boye

The nation's largest organization of coin collectors will establish a Consumer Protection Committee in another effort to help the hobby polish its tarnished image.

The committee probably will be asked to gather information about coin scams for the ANA Board of Governors, which can expel ANA members from the organization for unethical conduct.

"Some people are being duped out of thousands of dollars by buying overgraded coins or through other shady transactions," said ANA President Stephen R. Taylor. "We've got to clean up our industry before the government does it for us."

Last year the 32,000-member ANA and the Federal Trade Commission published a "Consumer Alert" brochure on rare coins. It states that buying coins can be a good investment and a satisfying hobby, but that many Americans have lost money be-

cause of fraudulent sales practices.

Taylor plans to meet this weekend [March 4-5] with Murphysboro, Ill., writer William Atkinson, who has agreed to chair the new committee. Atkinson has said that he wants his group—which should be in operation by spring—to foster basic education.

"Almost all consumer education [in coin investing] is generated by the big dealers. That's a basic conflict because it's in their best interest to promote [the sale of] coins," Atkinson said.

The new ANA committee will make its debut in the wake of a

scathing article on the coin business in the February issue of *Changing Times* magazine. It described several unethical dealers and claimed that fraud is "only one of the perils in this . . . unregulated market."

Changing Times also advised would-be investors to avoid coins unless they are willing to acquire expertise, take risks and follow the market.

"Experienced numismatists will realize that the magazine overstated the problem," Atkinson said. But the article served a purpose "because consumers need to be frightened [about coin fraud]."